

FAQs about TDOT-TDOT Watershed Sign Project – March 2008

What are Watershed Signs?



Placing watershed signs along Tennessee roadways is a joint project supported by the Tennessee Department of Transportation and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. These signs will increase public awareness regarding the importance of watersheds and encourage good stewardship of the state's valuable rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes, and ground water.

This educational effort is intended to help individuals become more aware and interested in watersheds by increasing recognition of watersheds and also discouraging pollution of Tennessee's streams and rivers.

How many signs will each watershed get?

TDOT has worked cooperatively with TDEC to establish a watershed signing program that will place 77 Interstate (or freeway) signs and 110 state route signs at entry points to the 55 watersheds throughout the state, for total of 187 signs.

Each watershed may have between one (1) and seven (7) signs based on the geographic location and how many major highways enter the watershed. Most watersheds will have about four (4) signs each.

When were the signs installed?

TDOT contractor began installation in late February and installed all watershed signs by March 1, 2008.

How much did each sign cost?

The larger interstate size sign averaged about \$3,500 each with the smaller state route sign averaging about \$237 each. Actual cost of each sign varies based on the overall size, which is dependent on the amount of text shown.

What is the expected total cost for the complete project?

Total contract cost for watershed sign installations is \$280,194.85.

Who is paying for the signs?

TDOT and TDEC are partnering to fund this program.

Where does the money come from?

TDOT's funding is coming from our MS4 program as part of education and outreach efforts. Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) programs are required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and TDEC to reduce pollution from storm water to surface waters and groundwater.

Municipalities with populations of 50,000 or greater and some smaller designated cities along with other public entities with significant storm water drainage systems such as universities, counties or state transportation departments have been selected to have MS4 programs. TDOT is one of these designated MS4 programs. Funds from TDOT's MS4 program can only be used for education purposes.

As part of TDOT's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit, the department was required to develop and implement a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) to reduce the discharge of pollutants from our storm sewer system to the maximum extent practicable.

The SWPPP covers six minimum control measures:

- Public education and outreach;
- Public participation/involvement;
- Illicit discharge detection and elimination;
- Construction site runoff control;
- Post-construction site runoff control; and
- Pollution prevention/good housekeeping.

As part of public education and outreach on storm water impacts, TDOT is developing an education program to reach three major audiences, (1) the public, (2) TDOT contractors, and (3) TDOT employees. The program is intended to leverage existing programs within the department to develop, implement, and maintain a public education program designed to educate the public about the

impacts of highway storm water discharges on adjacent streams and lakes and the steps that the public can take to reduce pollutants in storm water runoff. Where possible, TDOT plans to participate and coordinate with other MS4s.

The purpose of the signs is to increase awareness and recognize the importance of watersheds and encourage good stewardship of the state's valuable rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes, and ground water.

TDEC's financial contribution to this project comes from funds directed through a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP). A SEP is created when TDEC takes enforcement action against a regulated entity for environmental violations, and that entity pays part or all of an imposed civil penalty through an mutually agreed upon environmental project.

About Watersheds in Tennessee

What is a watershed?

A watershed is the entire land area that drains into a lake, river, or other water body. Watersheds can be small, like the area that drains into a neighborhood creek, or large, like all the area that drains into a large river. Everyone lives in a watershed. There are 55 recognized watersheds in Tennessee.

Tennessee shares parts of 35 watersheds with our neighboring states. That means that almost 2/3 of our watersheds have streams entering or leaving Tennessee. Every watershed but the Conasauga River in southeast Tennessee drains directly or indirectly to the Mississippi River.

How can you find out about a watershed of interest?

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's provides a variety of online water resources at www.tdec.net/watershedsigns.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers *Surf Your Watershed* at www.epa.gov/surf. *Surf Your Watershed* is a service to help you locate, use, and share environmental information about your state and watershed.

How does Tennessee manage Watersheds?

Everyone is encouraged to see the most recent Watershed Water Quality Management Plans at www.tdec.net/wpc/watershed. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation also makes it easy for citizens to learn about, and participate in, discussions about their watershed of interest. Once a year, TDEC holds meetings in the watershed to hear from the people who live there and to share the latest information from the water specialists at the department.